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PUBLIC SERVANT
ENDORSEMENT 2

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Missouri State Senator

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Proverbs 22:6

FROM OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

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God's Word on Spanking [Proverbs]



This week I would like to investigate what God says about spanking a child. We will study what the book of Proverbs, as well as the whole of Scripture, teaches about this increasingly controversial subject.

It is important for public servants to know the mind of God on this matter, lest they legislate from naïveté, void of God's wisdom in this regard.

Given the depraved nature of man, for the institution of the State to prohibit the institution of the family from carrying out its God ordained responsibility of disciplining a citizen in his or her youth, is to sow the seeds of cultural discord for tomorrow.

Ralph Drollinger

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

- Governors:** Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom
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- Senate Members:** Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served
- House Members:** Thursdays 8am, AG Hearing Rm., Longworth 1302, hot breakfast served

The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.



PUBLIC SERVANT
ENDORSEMENT

Mike Moon

Missouri State Senator
District 29



“OFTENTIMES WE FORGET that laws originate from our Creator.

“In the Scriptures, we can point to the first ten laws which should be our guide in the laws we create as legislators.

“Our very government system is rooted in the Bible (Exodus 18).

“Throughout the Scriptures we find examples of men and women who were used by God to further His kingdom. Never did it cross my mind that God would someday place me in the Missouri General Assembly (first as a representative and now as a senator).

“In April 2013, I joined the ranks of Missouri lawmakers (the result of a special election). The Lord had been working for some time (in my life and in my work) to prepare me for this new occupation as a member of the legislature.

“Upon my arrival in the Missouri House, I realized that

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I. INTRODUCTION

Government must be ever careful not to encroach upon the responsibilities that God gave the family and the Church, and the reasons are clear in Scripture, as we shall see.

II. THE CAUSE FOR SPANKING

Jeremiah 17:9 states, “*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?*” This is a classic summary passage pertaining to the sinful status of mankind. Scripture is replete and consistent on the fact that *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). Contrary to this truth, if children come into this world morally and ethically neutral then all they really need is education; direction, not correction: a good environment. Herein is the viewpoint of the Humanist, who believes that man is basically good, and his greatest need is education. He reasons, since all problems are remedied with learning, there is no need for corrective discipline.

In reality, however, this is a biblically naïve philosophy; there is a sin problem, and it needs to be addressed immediately. To illustrate this, study a baby long before he talks. He struggles against you, for example, during diaper changes or when you instruct him not to touch something. All babies possess a self-will that defies authority. Left unchecked, this self-will will eventually bloom into teenage rebellion. A child’s problem is not a lack of education and instruction. More accurately his problem is that which is stated in Proverbs 22:15a, *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child* Proverbs defines a fool as one who refuses to

submit to authority or reproof (cf. Psalm 14:1). Herein then, in summary, is the biblical cause for the necessity of correction through spanking.

III. THE CASE FOR SPANKING

Proverbs 13:24 states, *He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.* The Hebrew word for *rod* (*shebet*) means “staff or stick.” This derivation of the word refers to that part of a tree from which the same could be made. In ancient history it became the name of a tribe that carried them. Derivatively, the word has come to mean “a tool of discipline.” In Psalm 2:9 *shebet* describes the wielding of a rod of iron over opposing nations by the Messiah at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom (Cf. Job 21:9; 37:13; Psalm 45).

Proverbs 10:13 is the first mention of corporal punishment in the book (corporal, not to be confused with the word “corporate,” is derived from “corpus,” meaning “body”). Solomon states, *a rod (shebet) is for the back of him who lacks understanding.* Why? This tactile response of the parent to the child provides an immediate correlation of sowing and reaping regarding the foolishness of rebellion (cf. Galatians 6:7). *Merriam-Webster* defines corporal punishment as “that which is administered by an adult to the body of a child ranging in severity from a slap to a spanking.” Author Tedd Tripp, in his excellent book, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, goes a step further. The rod isn’t so much the physical object as much as it is the parent who spansks in obedience to Scripture:



The rod is a parent [who] in faith toward God and faithfulness toward his or her children, undertakes the responsibility of careful, timely, measured, and controlled use of physical punishment to underscore the importance of obeying God, thus rescuing the child from continuing in his foolishness until death.¹

In summary, the rod, according to the Bible, is God's specific means of dealing with, and is the remedy for, foolishness in the heart of a child. Yes, effective verbal communication is necessary too, but,

When rebellion is present, to speak without spanking is woefully inadequate.

Consider this in a governmental sense. The Legislature creates penalties for those who violate society's laws. Submission is required. Punishment follows a lack of submission to Congress's authority. How would the people of the United States behave if the Legislature removed all penalties for violating its laws? Would "talking things through" with law-breakers be more effective? Does talking things through with foreign adversaries who violate agreements work? No. The lack of enforcement only exacerbates the rebellious nature of mankind. Anarchy flourishes where punishment fails! Words without enforcement are ineffective.

It is the same in the family. Continuing on this point, Proverbs is clear and repetitive:

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him (22:15).

Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol (23:13–14).

The instrument of the rod is the means God has ordained by which foolishness is exchanged for wisdom and a proper fear of God and His authority. It therefore matters little what we might think about spanking. The issue is this: will we obey God on this matter? Will we follow His methods for childrearing or not? Does Father God know best?

Unfortunately, some parents abuse their children under the guise of spanking. But such extremes are not God's design, nor do they serve to expunge God's design from consideration. Spanking incorrectly is sin, as we will now see.

IV. THE CAUTIONS IN SPANKING

Parents (and only the parents of a child) are to spank when there is clear-cut rebellion to authority. Again, it is a measured, careful, timely, and controlled act of love toward the child who has distanced him or herself by insubordinate actions.

The best way to think of this is as a rescue mission.² You are on a mission to redeem your child from foolishness. Since God has commanded your children to obey you (Ephesians 6:1), it is not an act of kindness to allow them to get away with rebellion. To do so is a severe disservice to your offspring

VERSE OF THE WEEK



Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.



Use God's ordained tools for childrearing, my friend, and you will be blessed by the results!





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there was an expectation to simply go along with the majority. Of course, some votes agreed with my caucus. Others, many others as it turned out, did not.

“Before I was elected, I studied the life of Daniel. He was placed in some pretty difficult situations. In each case, as depicted in the Bible, Daniel stood his ground. He was able to do this because he was on solid ground—his unrelenting faith in the God of the Bible provided a foundation which he stood on with confidence—knowing that whatever happened to him was of no consequence.

“Daniel’s life provides for us, no matter where we are and what we do for a living, an example of consistent trust in the God of Heaven—Yahweh.

“During the legislative session, it’s easy to become distracted from our normal routines.

“The Bible studies provided by Capital Ministries’ ministry leader Matt Goodsell offer opportunities to turn our minds toward God as we study the Scriptures.

“We may be away from home, but God’s Word is the same wherever we go.

“I’m grateful to Pastor Goodsell for his perseverance. His desire to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ is evident and we are blessed to have him serve us during our short time in office.”

Senator Moon participates in Bible studies led by Pastor Matt Goodsell to members of the Missouri Legislature.

and your headship in the institution of the family. As was stated previously, it is akin to (in the institution of government) the police force becoming passive on crime, or a nation ignoring the aggression of another country (which fires off missiles after signing an agreement stating they will not do that!), or the boss at work or the elder in the church turning his eyes away from evil. There is no difference in principle; each respective institution will deteriorate if it fails to act as a loving, authoritative disciplinarian. Having said that, spanking can be performed incorrectly in at least four ways.

A. SPANKING WITH ANGER

James 1:20 says, *for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.* The biblical injunction to spank does not mean God gives parents the right to throw a temper tantrum in the process. Spanking should be done in love and sobriety in order to restore. Ephesians 6:4 echoes this principle, *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

B. SPANKING WITH VIOLENCE

When Proverbs speaks of violence it is the Hebrew word *betsa*, meaning “unjust or dishonest gain, illicit gain, plunder.” In that the rod is for the specific purpose of correction and discipline, parents are not granted the oblique use of physical force. Such license is found nowhere within this scriptural concept. A parent who bullies his children will certainly lose their spirit and loyalty, grossly failing to achieve the biblical purpose of corporal punishment. The following Proverbs underscore these fruits of

violent behavior, be it a parent who disciplines abusively or any other pillaging activity:

So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; it takes away the life of its possessors (1:19).

Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways (3:31).

A man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good (16:29).

The root word for entice can also be translated “persuade or lure.” A man of violence persuades his child to the same. In fact, many of today’s prison inmates suffered at the hands of violent, abusive parents or guardians.

This serves to make my point in the introduction: a nation that prohibits spanking, or wherein spanking is done incorrectly, serves to greatly diminish the future health of the nation. To refrain from spanking does not foster a more peaceful world in the long run; in fact, just the opposite is the case! A society will grow far worse if spanking is banned.

If spanking is outlawed in the home today, the police force will have to increase tomorrow.

Familial discipline is much more effective and economically efficient than State discipline. For government to prohibit the institution of the family from performing its God-ordained purpose is to assign itself a much heavier workload. The prison population of today is nothing compared to what it will be tomorrow if parents are



James Kent

prohibited from properly correcting the errant behavior of their children. The wise lawmaker allows the family to discipline the nation's citizens at a young age rather than taking on the family's God-ordained assignment.

C. SPANKING WITH FRUSTRATION

It is unwise for a parent to discipline a child while he or she is under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol and violence usually go hand in hand. The abuse of alcohol and the abuse of children are kindred folk. An inebriated parent has poor judgment and diminished patience which leads to frustration-driven spanking. Again, the rod requires careful, timely, measured, and controlled use—all opposites to bad behaviors exacerbated by intoxication.

No matter what else is going on in a parent's life, spanking is not an opportunity for venting frustrations. Notice the negation of this idea in the following passages.

For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence (4:17).

Proverbs 20:1 adds that *strong drink is a brawler*.

The violence of the wicked will drag them away, because they refuse to act with justice (21:7).

Spanking for reasons other than a child's rebellion will have a pernicious (highly injurious or destructive) effect. Keep in mind that if a child is spanked unjustly—out of your frustration in contrast to his or her sin—the results will be separating, rather than rescuing, bonding and healing.

D. SPANKING WITH RETRIBUTION

From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good, but the desire of the treacherous is violence (13:2).

Treachery carries the idea of an insecure footing, the idea of a lack of trust. Violent discipline may stem from a parent who is treacherous, or believes the child to be treacherous; however, biblical corporal punishment does not condone the idea of getting even. An overly authoritarian parent who attempts to extract a "pound of flesh" will not endear a child's heart. Such vengeance will drive the child further away and fail to achieve God's intended purposes for the rod in the child's proper upbringing.

V. THE COMPARISON TO SPANKING

Hebrews 12:5–11 is a wonderful NT passage outlining God's heavenly desire to discipline His spiritual children—those whom He has chosen but need rescue from besetting sins. This passage serves to incorporate the previous proverbial instruction on parental discipline with the very character of God:

"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not



"My children, I wish to talk to you. During my early and middle life I was, perhaps, rather skeptical with regard to some of the truths of Christianity. Not that I did not have the utmost respect for religion and always read my Bible, but the doctrine of the atonement was one I never could understand, and I felt inclined to consider as impossible to be received in the way Divines taught it. I believe I was rather inclined to Unitarianism; but of late years my views have altered. I believe in the doctrines of the prayer books as I understand them, and hope to be saved through the merits of Jesus Christ.... My object in telling you this is that if anything happens to me, you might know, and perhaps it would console you to remember, that on this point my mind is clear: I rest my hopes of salvation on the Lord Jesus Christ."

— James Kent, judge, law professor, "Father of American Jurisprudence."

William Kent, *Memoirs and Letters of James Kent*, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1898), 276–277



Elias Boudinot



Drawn with the Physiognosonice cap. by S. A. M. Minin, Philadelphia, 1800.

Elias Boudinot.

A letter to his daughter,

“You have been instructed from your childhood in the knowledge of your lost state by nature—the absolute necessity of a change of heart and an entire renovation of soul to the image of Jesus Christ—of salvation through His meritorious righteousness only—and the indispensable necessity of personal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord [Hebrews 12:14]. You are well acquainted that the most perfect and consummate doctrinal knowledge is of no avail without it operates on and sincerely affects the heart, changes the practice, and totally influences the will—and that without the almighty

Continued next page

sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

The capital letters are a quotation by the writer of Hebrews from the OT book of Job (that is the translation style of the NASB editors to indicate the NT writer is quoting an OT writer). It should be noted that Solomon quotes the same passage from Job in Proverbs 3:11–12. What is being said in the NT book of Hebrews is certainly illustrated by the life of Job in perhaps the most extreme way. Notice the authentication of the principle of the use of the rod here in the NT: *Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them ... for they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them.*

Note importantly and in addition from this passage, the purpose for God commanding us to discipline our children and for His disciplining us, His children (His saints, cf. Ephesians 1:4), has to do not only with our yielding the fruits of righteousness but also with God's preparation of a spotless bride—His Church—to present to His Son at the future marriage supper of the Lamb (cf. Revelation 19:9; 21:1–2). This theological insight provides the believer with additional impetus for being a rod-bearing parent.

God the Father is intent about our maturation not only for our good, but also as a means to gift His Son.

In perhaps the most well-known of all psalms, the one that depicts the LORD as our shepherd, King David states, *Your rod (shebet) and Your staff, they comfort me* (23:4). Again, God intends a peaceful, comforting fruit of righteousness to result from His servant who goes by the name Discipline. Therefore, the imperative truths of Hebrews 12 coupled with insightful truths of Revelation 19 and 21 provide a wonderful insight into the mind of God on this matter of spanking. Corrective discipline is at the core of His essence; it is part of His nature (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:20; Philippians 1:6; 2:13; Revelation 12:5) to achieve His intended outcome in thankfulness for His Son's sacrifice for sin! What wonderful insights Scripture affords us in order to motivate us to become loving disciplinarians in and for God's grand scheme of things!

VI. THE CONCLUSION OF SPANKING

The following Proverbs illuminate the fabulous results of proper parenting. Notice them carefully as it relates to both:

A. THE FUTURE OF THE CHILD

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul (29:15,17).



Not only does the rod bring the skill at living life to the child, in contrast to life-long rebellion toward all forms of authority, but the rod, properly used, blesses and will bring comfort and delight to the very soul of the parents. Use of the rod is reflected in and by the idea of training in the following Proverb:

Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it (22:6).

These future results should motivate everyone to be a good parent. Use God's ordained tools for childrearing, my friend, and you will be blessed by the results!

It should be underscored again that God's Word does not allow parents to choose whether to spank their children as a form of discipline. Spanking a rebellious child is not optional, as was previously seen in Proverbs 23:13–14. Spanking is not a suggestion, as if there are alternatively good ways of raising your child. Today, unfortunately, too many professing Christians, because of a lack of biblical understanding or outright rebellion, assert that spanking or not spanking is a personal preference. It is not.

Christians are not at liberty to pick and choose when they will follow God's commands.

Parents, think of spanking in this way: as hard as it is for you to spank your child, his or her obedience to God in the future is directly related to yours in the present.

B. THE FUTURE OF THE STATE

In the Proverbs just mentioned from chapter 29, verse 16 was intentionally bypassed for the purposes of emphasis. Notice that Solomon states to Rehoboam what the impact on the State will be from a lack of familial spanking:

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. When the wicked increase, transgression increases; but the righteous will see their fall. Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul (29:15–17).

The bottom line is this:

In Proverbs' broadest context, verse 16 finds Solomon instructing his son, who would become the next King of Israel, on the relationship between the health of a nation and familial spanking: the results are both personal (vv. 15 and 17) as well as national (v. 16).

Per verse 16, Solomon says to the future national leader that when children get their own way in the home, transgressions in society will increase. And as a result, the reign of those societies will be short-lived: the word *their* is a pronoun for nations. The righteous, that is to say, the wise and discerning individuals who get the connection here will see this for themselves over time. Such was the case with Noah who witnessed the destruction of the old world (Genesis 7:23); Abraham, who witnessed (without looking over his shoulder I might add) the destruction and the ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:28); and Israel as a whole who witnessed the Egyptians' death on

Elias Boudinot (continued)

power of the Spirit of God enlightening your mind, subduing your will, and continually drawing you to Himself, you can do nothing.... And may the God of your parents (for many generations past) seal instruction to your soul and lead you to Himself through the blood of His too greatly despised Son, Who notwithstanding, is still reclaiming the world to God through that blood, not imputing to them their sins. To Him be glory forever!"

— Elias Boudinot, president of Congress, signed the Peace Treaty to end the American Revolution, first attorney admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, framer of the Bill of Rights, director of the U.S. Mint.

Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation* (Philadelphia: Asbury Dickins, 1801), xii–xiv, from the prefatory remarks to his daughter, Susan, on October 30, 1782.





the west side of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:30). This principle is replete throughout Scripture:

If a nation deters spanking in the home today, it will reap a catastrophic harvest tomorrow!

In that government is called by God to be a form of His restraining grace in a fallen world (1 Peter 2:13-14), it must empower and encourage—not encroach upon—the family to do its job of wielding the rod in the home and the Church to teach what God's Word says. It is sheer folly for government to legislate the rod from the home! Our penal system must partner with the other institutions that God has ordained, rather than cutting them off, taking a burden to itself that will be unmanageable within another generation. Don't be foolish.



Making Disciples of Jesus Christ in the Political Arena Throughout the World



Capitol Ministries provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, Capitol Ministries has started ongoing ministries in more than forty U.S. state Capitols and dozens of foreign federal Capitols.

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- 1. Tedd Tripp, Shepherding a Child's Heart, Shepherd Press, 2005, 104.
2. Ibid.